

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 63  
By Williams

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Lora Patterson.

WHEREAS, it was with great sadness and a profound sense of loss that the members of this General Assembly and the citizens of our state learned of the untimely death of Lora Patterson, a former Nashville resident who was an accomplished aerialist and circus performer; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Patterson tragically lost her life while practicing for an aerial event to be performed during the 1997 Super Bowl half-time show; and

WHEREAS, the event was subsequently canceled and, instead, a tribute to Ms. Patterson was featured as part of the Super Bowl XXXI half-time activities; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of Nashville's Stratford High School, Lora "Dinky" Patterson hailed from a circus tradition and background: her parents were both longtime circus performers, and at the time of her death, she was part of a sixteen-person team that included her husband, Scott Osgood and sister, Wendy Plunkett, all of whom are accomplished aerialists; and

WHEREAS, her father, Walter Patterson, worked for years as a trampoline acrobat, trapeze catcher and as businessman on the Shrine circuit and also with Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey: and

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WHEREAS, her mother, Ruth Patterson in addition to having enjoyed an equally illustrious career in the circus, is a valuable and much beloved employee of this General Assembly, serving with dedication and professionalism as the secretary for Representative Bill Dunn and Representative Dennis Roach; and

WHEREAS, at the tender age of seventeen, Lora Patterson began practicing for her future circus career in her backyard in Nashville, swinging from a bar on homemade rigging that she and her father had strung between trees; and

WHEREAS, described by her peers and family as a “consummate professional”, Lora Patterson had spent her entire life under the “big top”, fine-tuning a solo trapeze act that circus insiders said was one of the finest in the world; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, she landed a berth in “The Greatest Show on Earth”; nicknamed “Dinky”, she adopted the stage name Lorelei, and spent four outstanding years as a trapeze star with Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her parents, Walter and Ruth Patterson, her loving husband of four years, Scott Osgood and sister Wendy Plunkett, Lora Patterson is survived by her in-laws, Clayton and Maravene Osgood; brothers-in-law and sister-in-law, Kevin, Shawn and Chandra Osgood; and nephew and niece, Joshua and Rachel Plunkett; and

WHEREAS, Lora Patterson was not only a brilliant aerial performer, but also a warm and compassionate wife, daughter, sister, aunt and human being; her passing is mourned not only by her friends and family but also by the entire circus world who loved her dearly and respected her without reservation; and

WHEREAS, while this General Assembly also mourns the tragic loss of this exemplary woman at so young an age, we can take solace in the fact that Lora Patterson died performing the work she loved so much and to which she had dedicated herself completely; and

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that we should pause to commemorate her bountiful life of purpose and commitment ; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby honor the memory of Lora Patterson, remembering fondly her zest for performing, her love of the circus, her consummate professionalism, and her equally important role as a loving wife, daughter, sister, aunt and friend.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That on behalf of the entire staff of this General Assembly, we extend our sympathy and condolences to Lora Patterson's family and many friends, and especially our beloved colleague and friend, Ruth Patterson.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.